

PRESUMPTUOUS SINS NO. 135

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 7, 1857,
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AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.”
Psalm 19:13.*

ALL sins are great sins but yet some sins are greater than others. Every sin has in it the very venom of rebellion and is full of the essential marrow of traitorous rejection of God. But there are some sins which have in them a greater development of the essential mischief of rebellion and which wear upon their faces more of the brazen pride which defies the Most High. It is wrong to suppose that because all sins will condemn us, that therefore one sin is *not* greater than another. The fact is, that while all transgression is a greatly grievous sinful thing, yet there are some transgressions which have a deeper shade of blackness and a more double scarlet dyed hue of criminality than others. Now the *presumptuous sins* of our text are the chief of all sins—they rank head and foremost in the list of iniquities. It is remarkable that though an atonement was provided under the Jewish law for every kind of sin, there was this one exception—“But the soul that sins presumptuously shall have no atonement, it shall be cut off from the midst of My people.” Under the Christian dispensation in the sacrifice of our blessed Lord, there is a great and precious atonement for presumptuous sins whereby sinners who have sinned in this manner are made clean. Yet without a doubt, presumptuous sinners dying without pardon must expect to receive a double portion of the wrath of God and a more dreadful manifestation of the unutterable anguish of the torment of eternal punishment in the Pit that is dug for the wicked.

I shall this morning, first of all, endeavor to *describe presumptuous sins*. Secondly, I shall try, if I can, to *show by some illustrations why the presumptuous sin is more heinous than any other*. And then thirdly, I shall try to *press this prayer upon your notice*—the prayer, mark you, of the holy man—the prayer of David—“Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.”

I. First, then, WHAT IS A PRESUMPTUOUS SIN? Now I think there must be one of four things in a sin in order to make it presumptuous. It must either be a sin against light and knowledge, or a sin committed with deliberation, or a sin committed with a design of sinning merely for sinning’s sake, or else it must be a sin committed through hardihood, from a man’s rash confidence in his own strength. We will mark these points one by one.

1. A sin that is *committed willfully against manifest light and knowledge* is a presumptuous sin. A sin of ignorance is not presumptuous unless that ignorance is also willful, in which case the ignorance is, itself, a presumptuous sin. But when a man sins for lack of knowing better—for lack of knowing the law, for lack of instruction, reproof, advice and admonition, we say that his sin, so committed, does not partake to any great extent of the nature of a presumptuous sin. But when a man knows better and sins in the very teeth and face of his increased light and knowledge, then his sin deserves to be branded with this ignominious title of a presumptuous sin. Let me just dwell on this thought a moment. Conscience is often an inner light to men whereby they are warned of forbidden acts as being sinful. Then if I sin against conscience, though I have no greater light than conscience affords me, still my sin is presumptuous—because I have presumed to go against that voice of God in my heart—an enlightened conscience. You, young men, were once tempted, (and perhaps it was but yesterday), to commit a certain act. The very moment you were tempted, conscience said, “It is wrong, it is wrong”—it shouted *murder* in your heart and told you the deed you were about to commit was abominable in the sight of the Lord. Your fellow apprentice committed the same sin without the warning of conscience. In him it was guilt—guilt which needs to be washed away with the Savior’s blood. But it was not such guilt in him as it was in you—because your conscience warned you! Your conscience told you of the danger, warned you of the punishment and yet you dared to go astray against God—and therefore you sinned presumptuously! You

have sinned very grievously in having done so. When a man shall trespass on my ground, he shall be a trespasser though he has no warning. But if straight before his face there stands a warning and if he knowingly and willingly trespasses—then he is guilty of a presumptuous trespass and is to be so far punished accordingly. So you, if you had not known better. If your conscience had been less enlightened, you might have committed the deed with far less of the criminality which now attaches to you because you sinned against conscience and, consequently, sinned presumptuously.

But, oh how much greater is the sin when man not only has the light of conscience, but has also *the admonition of friends*, the advice of those who are wise and esteemed by him! If I have but one check—the check of my enlightened conscience—and I transgress against it, I am presumptuous! But if a mother with tearful eyes warns me of the consequence of my guilt and if a father with steady looks and with affectionate determined earnestness, tells me what will be the fate of my transgression—if friends who are dear to me—counsel me to avoid the way of the wicked and warn me what must be the inevitable result of continuing in it, then I am presumptuous and my act in that very proportion becomes more guilty! I would have been presumptuous for having sinned against the light of nature, but I am more presumptuous, when added to that, I have the light of affectionate counsel and of kind advice! Therein I bring upon my head a double amount of divine wrath. And how much more is this the case when the transgressor has been gifted with what is usually called a religious education? In childhood he has been lighted to his bed by the lamps of the sanctuary, the name of Jesus was mingled with the hush of lullaby. The music of the sanctuary woke him like a hymn at morning. He has been rocked on the knees of piety and has sucked the breasts of godliness. He has been tutored and trained in the way he should go—how much more fearful, I say—is the guilt of such a man than that of those who have never had such training but have been left to follow their own wayward lusts and pleasures without the restraint of a holy education and the restraints of an enlightened conscience!

But, my friends, even this may become worse. A man sins yet more presumptuously *when he has had a most special warning from the voice of God against the sin*. “What do you mean?” you ask. Why, I mean this—you saw but yesterday a strong man in your neighborhood brought to the grave by sudden death. It is but a month ago that you heard the bell toll for one whom you once knew and loved, who procrastinated and procrastinated until he perished in procrastination! You have had strange things happen in your very street and the voice of God has been spoken loudly through the lips of death to you. Yes, and you have had warnings, too, in your own body. You have been sick with fever—you have been brought to the jaws of the grave and you have looked down into the bottomless vault of destruction! It is not long ago since you were given up. All said they might prepare a coffin for you, for your breath could not long be in your body. Then you turned your face to the wall and prayed—you vowed that if God would spare you, you would live a goodly life that you would repent of your sins—but to your own confusion you are now just what you were! Ah, let me tell you, your guilt is more grievous than that of any other man! You have sinned presumptuously in the very highest sense in which you could have done so! You have sinned against reproofs, but what is still worse, you have sinned against your own solemn oaths and covenants and against the promises that you made to God! He who plays with fire must be condemned as careless, but he who has been burned once and afterwards plays with the destroying element is worse than careless! And he who has been scorched in the flame and has had his locks all hot and crisp with the burning—if he again should rush headlong into fire—I say he is worse than careless, he is worse than presumptuous, he is mad! But I have some such here. They have had warnings so terrible that they should have known better. They have gone into lusts which have brought their bodies into darkness and, perhaps, they have crept up this day to this house and they dare not tell their neighbor who stands by their side what is the loathsomeness that even now breeds upon their frame! And yet they will go back to the same lusts! The fool will go again to the stocks, the sheep will lick the knife that is to slay him. You will go on in your lust and in your sins, despite warnings, despite advice, until you perish in your guilt. How worse than children are grown-up men! The child who goes for a merry slide upon a pond, if he is told that the ice will not hold him, starts back frightened. Or if he daringly creeps upon it, how soon he leaves it if he hears but a crack upon the slender covering of the water! But you men have a conscience which tells you that your sins are vile and that they will be your ruin! You hear the crack of sin, as its thin sheet of pleasure gives way beneath your feet—yes, and some of you have seen your com-

rades sink in the flood and lost—and yet you go sliding on, worse than children, worse than mad are you, thus presumptuously to play with your own everlasting state! O my God, how terrible is the presumption of some! How fearful is presumption in any! Oh, that we might be enabled to cry, “Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.”

2. I said, again, that another characteristic of a presumptuous sin was *deliberation*. A man, perhaps, may have a passionate spirit and in a moment of hot haste he may utter an angry word of which in a few short minutes he will sincerely repent. A man may have a temper so hot that the least provocation causes him at once to be full of wrath. But he may also have a temperament which has this benefit to balance it—that he very soon learns to forgive and cools in a moment. Now, such a man does not sin presumptuously—when suddenly overcome by anger—though without doubt there is presumption in his sin unless he strives to correct that passion and keep it down! A man, again, who is suddenly tempted and surprised into a sin which is not his habit, but which he commits through the force of some strong temptation, is guilty—but not guilty of presumption—because he was taken unaware in the net and caught in the snare. But there are other men who sin deliberately. There are some who can think of a lust for weeks beforehand and dote upon their darling crime with pleasure. They do, as it were, water the young seedling of lust until it grows to the maturity of desire and then they go and commit the crime! There are some to whom lust is not a passerby but a lodger at home. They receive it, they house it, they feast on it and when they sin, they sin deliberately—walk coolly to their lusts and in cold blood commit the act which another might haply do in hot and furious haste. Now, such a sin has in it a great extent of sinfulness—it is a sin of high presumption! To be carried away as by a whirlwind of passion in a moment is wrong, but to sit down and deliberately resolve upon revenge is cursed and diabolical. To sit down and deliberately fashion schemes of wickedness is heinous and I can find no other word to fitly express it. To deliberate carefully how the crime is to be done and Haman-like to build the gallows and set to work to destroy one’s neighbor—to get the pit dug that the friend may fall into it and be destroyed, to lay snares in secret, to plot wickedness upon one’s bed—this is a high pitch of presumptuous sin. May God forgive any of us, if we have been so far guilty!

Again, when a man continues long in sin, and has time to deliberate about it, that is also a proof that it is a presumptuous sin. He that sins once, being overtaken in a fault and then abhors the sin, has not sinned presumptuously. But he who transgresses today, tomorrow and the next day, week after week and year after year until he has piled up a heap of sins that are high as a mountain—such a man, I say, sins presumptuously. In a continued habit of sin there must be a deliberation to sin. There must be at least such a force and strength of mind as could not have come upon any man if his sin were but the hasty effect of sudden passion. Ah, take heed, you that are sod in sin, you that drink it down as the greedy ox drinks down water—you who run to your lust as the rivers run to the sea and you who go to your passions as the sow to her wallowing in the mire—take heed, your crimes are grievous and the hand of God shall soon fall terribly on your heads unless, by divine grace, it is granted to you to repent and turn to Him! Fearful must be your doom if God should condemn you for presumptuous sin. Oh, Lord, “Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.”

3. Again—I said that a presumptuous sin must be *a matter of design* and have been committed with the intention of sin. If at your leisure at home you will turn to that passage in the Book of Numbers where it says there is no pardon for a presumptuous sin under the Jewish dispensation, you will find immediately afterward, a case recorded. A man went out on the Sabbath to gather sticks. He was taken in the act of Sabbath-breaking, and the law being very stringent under the Jewish dispensation, he was ordered at once to be put to death. Now the reason why he was put to death was not merely because he gathered sticks on the Sabbath, but because the law had just then been proclaimed, “In it you shall do no manner of work.” This man willfully, in order, as it were, to show that he despised God—to show that he did not care for God—without any necessity, without any hope of advantage—went straight out in the very teeth of the law to perform not an act which he kept in his own house, which might, perhaps, have been overlooked—but an act which brought shame upon the whole congregation because infidel-like, he dared to brazen it out before God! As much as to say, “I care not for God.” Has God just commanded, “You shall do no manner of work?” Here I am! I do not need sticks today. I do not need to work. Not for the sake of sticks, but with the design of showing that I despise God, I go out this day and

gather sticks. "Now," says one, "surely there are no people in the world who have ever done such a thing as this." Yes, there are and there are such in the Surrey Music Hall this day! They have sinned against God, not merely for the pleasure of it, but because they would show their lack of reverence to God. That young man burned his Bible in the midst of his wicked companions—not because he hated his Bible, for he quivered and looked as pale as the ashes on the hearth when he was doing it. But he did it out of pure bravado, in order to show them, as he thought, that he really was far gone from anything like a profession of religion! That other man is accustomed, sometimes, to stand by the wayside when the people are going to the house of God and he swears at them. Not because he delights in swearing, but because he will show that he is irreligious, that he is ungodly! How many an infidel has done the same—not because he had any pleasure in the thing, itself, but because out of the wickedness of his heart he would spite God! He desired, if it were possible, to let men know that though the sin, itself, was cheap enough, he was determined to do something which would be like spitting in the face of his Maker and despising God who created him! Now, such a sin is a masterpiece of iniquity! There is a pardon for such a one—there is a full pardon to those who are brought to repentance, but few of such men ever receive it. For when they are so far gone as to sin presumptuously just because they will do it—sin merely for the sake of showing their disregard of God and of God's law—we say of such, there is pardon for them, but it is wondrous divine grace which brings them into such a condition that they are willing to accept it. Oh that God would keep back His servants here from presumptuous sins! And if any of us here have committed them, may He bring us back to the praise of the glory of His grace!

4. But one more point and I think I shall have explained these presumptuous sins. A presumptuous sin is also one that is committed *through a hardihood of fancied strength of mind*. Says one, "Tomorrow I intend to go into such-and-such a society because I believe, though it hurts other people, it does not hurt me." You turn round and say to some young man, "I could not advise you to frequent the Casino—it would be your ruin." But you go yourself, sir? "Yes." But how do you justify yourself? "Because I have such strength of principle that I know just how far to go and no farther." You lie, sir. Against yourself you lie. You lie presumptuously in so doing! You are playing with bombshells that shall burst and destroy you! You are sitting over the mouth of hell with a fancy that you shall not be burned. You have gone to haunts of vice and come back tainted, very much tainted—but because you are so blind as not to see the taint, you think yourself secure! You are not so. Your sin, in daring to think that you are immune to sin, is a sin of presumption. "No, no," one says, "I know that I can go just so far in such-and-such a sin and there I can stop." Presumption, sir. Nothing but presumption! It would be presumption for any man to climb to the top of the spire of a church and stand upon his head. "Well, but he might come down safely, if he were skilled in it." Yes, but it is presumptuous! I would no more think of subscribing a farthing to a man's ascent in a balloon than I would to a poor wretch cutting his own throat! I would no more think of standing and gazing at any man who puts his life in a position of peril than I would of paying a man to blow his brains out! I think such things, if not murders, are murderous. There is suicide in men risking themselves in that way. And if there is suicide in the risk of the body, how much more in the case of a man who puts his own *soul* in jeopardy just because he thinks he has strength of mind enough to prevent its being ruined and destroyed? Sir, your sin is a sin of presumption! It is a great and grievous one. It is one of the masterpieces of iniquity!

Oh, how many people there are who are sinning presumptuously today! You are sinning presumptuously in being today what you are. You are saying in a little time I will solemnly and seriously think of religion. In a few years, when I am a little more settled in life, I intend to turn over a new leaf and think about the matters of Godliness. Sir, you are presumptuous! You are presuming that you shall live—you are speculating upon a thing which is as frail as the bubble on the breaker! You are staking your everlasting soul on the deadly odds that you shall live for a few years—whereas, the probabilities are that you may be cut down before the sun shall set—and it is possible that before another year shall have passed over your head you may be in the land where repentance is impossible and useless were it possible! Oh, dear friends, procrastination is a presumptuous sin! The putting off of a thing which should be done today because you hope to live tomorrow, is a presumption! You have no right to do it—you are, in so doing, sinning against God and bringing on your heads the guilt of presumptuous sin. I remember that striking passage in Jonathan Edward's wonderful sermon which was the means of a great revival,

where he says, “sinner, you are this moment standing over the mouth of hell upon a single plank and that plank is rotten! You are hanging over the jaws of perdition by a solitary rope, and the strands of that rope are now creaking.” It is a terrible thing to be in such a position as that and yet to say, “Tomorrow,” and to procrastinate. You remind me, some of you, of that story of Dionysus the tyrant, who, wishing to punish one who had displeased him, invited him to a noble feast. Rich were the foods that were spread upon the table and rare the wines of which he was invited to drink. A chair was placed at the head of the table and the guest was seated within it. Horror of horrors! The feast might be rich, but the guest was miserable, dreadful beyond thought! However splendid might be the array of the servants and however rich the dainties, yet he who had been invited sat there in agony. For what reason? Because over his head, immediately over it, there hung a sword, a furbished sword, suspended by a single hair! He had to sit all the time with this sword above him, with nothing but a hair between him and death! You may conceive the poor man’s misery. He could not escape, he must sit where he was. How could he feast? How could he rejoice? But, oh my unconverted hearer, you are there this morning—with all your riches and your wealth before you, with the comforts of a home and the joys of a household (or with none of these if you are poor)—you are there this day, in a place from which you cannot escape! The sword of death is above you, prepared to descend. And woe unto you when it shall cleave your soul from your body! Can you yet make mirth and yet procrastinate? If you can, then verily your sin is presumptuous in a high degree. “Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.”

II. And now I come to the second part of the subject, with which I shall deal very briefly. I am to try and show you **THERE IS GREAT ENORMITY IN A PRESUMPTUOUS SIN.**

Let me take any one of the sins—for instance, *the sin against light and knowledge*. There is greater enormity in such a presumptuous sin than in any other. In this, our happy land, it is barely possible for a man to commit treason. I think it would be rather difficult for him to do it, for we are allowed to say words, here, which would bring our necks beneath the guillotine if they were spoken on the other side of the channel! And we are allowed to do deeds here which would bring us long years of imprisonment if the deed were done in any other land. We, despite all that our American friends may say, are the freest people to speak and think in the entire world! Though we have not the freedom of beating our slaves to death, or of shooting them if they choose to disobey; though we have not the freedom of hunting men, or the freedom of sucking another man’s blood out of him to make us rich; though we have not the freedom of being worse than devils, which slave-catchers, and many slave-holders most certainly are—we have liberty greater than *that*—liberty against the tyrant mob, as well as against the tyrant king! But I suppose it *is* possible to commit treason here. If two men should commit treason—if one of them should tomorrow wantonly and wickedly raise the standard of revolt—if he should denounce the rightful sovereign of this land in the strongest and most abominable language; if he should seek to entice the loyal subjects of this country from their allegiance and should draw some of them astray to the hurt and injury of the commonwealth—even so, he might have in his rebellious ranks one who joined incautiously. That one, not knowing whereunto the matter might tend, might have come into the midst of the rebels not understanding the intention of their unlawful assembling. He might not even had known of the law which prohibited them from being banded together. I can suppose these two men brought up upon a charge of high treason—they have both, legally, been guilty of it. But I can suppose that the one man who had sinned ignorantly would be acquitted, because there was no malignant intent and I can suppose that the other men, who had willfully, knowingly, maliciously and wickedly raised the standard of revolt, would receive the highest punishment which the law could demand. And why? Because in the one case it was a sin of presumption, and in the other case it was not so. In the one case the man dared to defy the sovereign and defy the law of the land willfully—out of mere presumption! In the other case, not so. Now, every man sees that it would be just to make a distinction in the punishment because there is—conscience itself tells us—a distinction in the guilt!

Again—some men, I have said, sin *deliberately* and others do not do so. Now, in order to show that there is a distinction here, let me take a case. Tomorrow the bench of magistrates are sitting. Two men are brought up. They are, each of them, charged with stealing a loaf of bread. It is clearly proved in the one case that the man was hungry and that he snatched the loaf of bread to satisfy his necessities. He is sorry for his deed. He grieves that he has done the act. But most manifestly he had a strong temptation to

it. In the other case, the man was rich and he willfully went into the shop merely because he would break the law and show that he was a law-breaker. He said to the policeman outside, "Now, I care neither for you nor the law. I intend to go in there just to see what you can do with me." I can suppose the magistrate would say to one man, "You are discharged. Take care not to do the same again. Here is something for your present necessities—seek to earn an honest living." But to the other I can conceive him saying, "You are an infamous wretch! You have committed the same deed as the other, but from very different motives. I give you the longest term of imprisonment which the law allows me and I can only regret that I cannot treat you worse than I have done." The presumption of the sin made the difference. So when you sin deliberately and knowingly, your sin against Almighty God is a higher and a blacker sin than it would have been if you had sinned ignorantly, or sinned in haste.

Now let us suppose one more case. In the heat of some little dispute someone shall insult you. You shall be insulted by a man of angry temper. You have not provoked him, you gave him no just cause for it. But at the same time he was of a hot and angry disposition. He was somewhat foiled in the debate and he insulted you, calling you by some name which has left a stain upon your character, so far as epithets can do it. I can suppose that you would ask no reparation of him, if by tomorrow you saw that it was just a rash word spoken in haste, of which he repented. But suppose another person should waylay you in the street. Should week after week seek to meet you in the marketplace and should, after a great deal of toil and trouble, at last meet you. And there—in the middle of a number of people—unprovoked, just out of sheer, deliberate malice, come before you and call you a liar! I can suppose that Christian as you are, you might find it necessary to chastise such insolence, not with your hand but with the arm of that equitable law which protects us all from insulting violence. In the other case I can suppose it would be no trouble for you to forgive. You would say, "My dear fellow, I know we are all hasty, sometimes—there, now, I don't care at all for it, you did not mean it." But in this case, where a man has dared and defied you without any provocation whatever, you would say to him, "Sir, you have endeavored to injure me in respectable society. I can forgive you as a Christian, but as a man and a citizen, I shall demand that I am protected against your insolence."

You see, therefore, in the cases that occur between man and man, how there is an excess of guilt added to a sin by presumption! Oh, you that have sinned presumptuously—and who among us has not done so?—bow your heads in silence, confess your guilt, and then open your mouths and cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me, a presumptuous sinner."

III. And now I am nearly done—not to weary you by too long a discourse we shall notice **THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THIS PRAYER**—"Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins."

Will you note that this prayer was the *prayer of a saint*; the prayer of a holy man of God? Did David need to pray thus? Did the "man after God's own heart" need to cry, "Keep back Your servant"? Yes, he did; and note the *beauty* of the prayer. If I might translate it into more metaphorical style, it is like this, "Curb Your servant from presumptuous sin. Keep him back, or he will wander to the edge of the precipice of sin. Hold him in, Lord, he is apt to run away. Curb him. Put the bridle on him. Do not let him do it. Let Your overpowering grace keep him holy. When he would do evil, then draw him to good, and when his evil propensities would lead him astray, then check him. Check your servant from presumptuous sins!"

What, then? Is it true that the best of men may sin presumptuously? Ah, it is true. It is a solemn thing to find the apostle Paul warning saints against the most loathsome of sins. He says, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, idolatry, inordinate affection," and such like. What? Do saints need warning against such sins as these? Yes, they do. The highest saints may sin the lowest sins unless kept by divine grace. You old experienced Christians, even in your experience, may yet trip unless you cry, "Hold me up, Lord, and I shall be safe." You whose love is fervent, whose faith is constant, whose hopes are bright, say not, "I shall never sin," but rather cry out, "Lord, lead me not into temptation but when there, leave me not there, for unless You hold me fast, I feel I must, I shall, decline and prove an apostate after all." There is enough tinder in the heart of the best men in the world to light a fire that shall burn to the lowest hell unless God should quench the sparks as they fall! There is enough corruption, depravity and wickedness in the heart of the most holy man that is now alive to damn his soul to all eternity—if free and sovereign grace does not prevent. O Christian, you

have need to pray this prayer! But I think I hear you crying, "Is your servant a dog that I should do this thing?" So said Hazael, when the prophet told him that he would slay his master. But he went home and took a wet cloth and spread it over his master's face and killed him—and he did, the next day, the sin which he abhorred the day before! Think it not enough to abhor sin—you may yet fall into it. Say not, "I never can be drunk, for I have such an abhorrence of drunkenness." You may fall where you are most secure. Say not, "I can never blaspheme God, for I have never done so in my life." Take care. You may yet swear most profanely. Job might have said, "I will never curse the day of my birth." But he lived to do it! He was a patient man, he might have said, "I will never murmur, though He slay me yet will I trust in Him." And yet he lived to wish that the day were darkness wherein he was brought forth. Boast not, then, O Christian, that you stand by faith. "Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall."

But if this needs to be the prayer of the best, how ought it to be the prayer of you and me? If the highest saint must pray it, O mere moralist, you have good need to utter it! And you who have begun to sin, who make no pretensions to piety—how much need is there for you to pray that you may be kept from presumptuously rebelling against God?

Instead, however, of enlarging upon that point, I shall close my few remarks this morning by just addressing myself most affectionately to such of you as are now under a sense of guilt by reason of presumptuous sins. God's Spirit has found some of you out this morning. I thought when I was describing presumptuous sin that I saw, here and there, an eye that was suffused with tears. I thought I saw here and there a head that was bowed down, as much as to say, "I am guilty there." I thought there were some hearts that palpitated with confession when I described the guilt of presumption. I hope it was so. If it were, I am glad of it. If I hit your consciences, it was what I meant to do. Not to your ears do I speak but to your hearts! I would not give the snap of my finger to gratify you with mere words of oratory, with a mere flow of language. No, God is my witness, I never sought effect yet, except the effect of hitting your consciences! I would use the words that would be most rough and vulgar in all our language if I could get at your heart better with them than with any other. If any of you feel, then, that you have presumed against God in sinning, let me just bid you look at your sin and weep over the blackness of it. Let me exhort you to go home and bow your heads with sorrow and confess your guilt and weep over it with many tears and sighs. You have greatly sinned and if God should blast you into perdition right now, He would be just! If now His fiery thunderbolt of vengeance should pierce you through—if the arrow that is now upon the string of the Almighty should find a target in your heart—He would be just. Go home and confess that—confess it with cries and sighs. And then what will you do next? Why, I bid you remember that there was a man who was God. That man suffered for presumptuous sin! I would bid you this day, sinner, if you know your need of a Savior, go up to your chamber, cast yourself upon your face and weep for sin. And when you have done that, turn to the Scriptures and read the story of that man who suffered and died for sin. See Him in all His unutterable agonies and griefs and woes and say—

*"My soul looks back to see
The burdens You did bear
When hanging on the accursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there."*

Lift up your hand and put it on His head who bled and say—

*"My faith would lay its hand
On that dear head of Yours,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin."*

Sit down at the foot of His cross and watch Him till your heart is moved, till the tears begin to flow again, until your heart breaks within you. And then you will rise and say—

*"Dissolved by His mercy, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."*

O sinner, you can never perish if you will cast yourself at the foot of the cross! If you seek to save yourself, you shall die. If you will come, just as you are—all black, all filthy, all hell-deserving, all ill-deserving—I am my Master's hostage—I will be answerable at the day of judgment for this matter if He does not save you! I can preach on this subject now, for I trust I have tried my Master myself. As a youth I sinned, as a child I rebelled, as a young man I wandered into lusts and vanities—my Master

made me feel how great a sinner I was and I sought to reform, to mend the matter, but I grew worse. At last I heard it said, "Look unto Me and be you saved all the ends of the earth." And I looked to Jesus. And oh, my Savior, You have eased my aching conscience, You have given me peace, You have enabled me to say—

*"Now freed from sin I walk at large
My Savior's blood's a full discharge.
At His dear feet my soul I lay,
A sinner saved, and homage pay."*

And oh, my heart pants for You! Oh that you who never knew Him could taste His love! Oh that you who have never repented might now receive the Holy Spirit who is able to melt the heart! And oh that you who are penitents would look to Him now! And I repeat that solemn assertion—I am God's hostage this morning. You may feed me bread and water to my life's end—yes, and I will bear the blame forever—if any of you seek Christ and Christ rejects you! It must not, it cannot be. "Whoever comes," He says, "I will in nowise cast out." "He is able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God by Him." May God Almighty bless you, and may we meet again in yonder paradise! And there will we sing more sweetly of redeeming love and dying blood, and of Jesus' power to save—

*"When this poor lisping, stammering tongue,
Lies silent in the grave."*

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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